Kennedy Disputes Kleindienst Speech

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Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) accused Deputy Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst of distorting the senator's remarks and committing distortions of his own in a speech yesterday defending police handling of the Mayday demonstrations here.

Kennedy said Kleindienst incorrectly described the mass arrest and detention of 7,000 antiwar demonstrators on May 3 as fair, humane and constitutional.

He said Kleindienst also quoted an earlier Kennedy speech out of context, making it appear that the Senator condoned attempts at illegal traffic disruptions by the demonstrators.

"Understanding the demonstrators' frustration, I said, 'does not imply endorsement' of their tactics," Kennedy asserted yesterday, "I emphasized (in the original speech) that 'I do not condone in any way the unlawful activities of the demonstrators.' "

Kleindienst's address, given in Cleveland and reported in part in yesterday's editions of The Washington Post, said Kennedy referred to the Mayday actions as "civil disobedience in the American tradition of Thoreau and Martin Luther King."

Kennedy said yesterday he still stands by his criticism of police abandonment of field arrest forms in making mass arrests and the detention of thousands of people in crowded makeshift jails, without what he said were adequate facilities or access to legal assistance.

He noted that Superior Court Judge James A. Belson, after touring the U.S. District Court cellblock, declared that prisoners were detained there under conditions amounting to "cruel and unusual punishment" and that health and sanitation facilities were "totally inadequate."

Kennedy observed that Kleindienst's speech did not mention this criticism or those of several other judges about the arrest and detention methods of police.

"Apart from his distortion of my own remarks," Kennedy said, "I would point to his statement that telephones were available to those arrested, which was absolutely untrue at RFK Stadium, in the U.S. Courthouse cellblock and other detention areas. His casual dismissal of the inhumane conditions of detention is rebutted flatly by (Belson's) court finding of cruel and unusual punishment."

Kennedy said, "I find most interesting his approval of indiscriminte arrest procedures through 2:10 p.m. on May 3 (when use of field arrest forms was restored) as necessary to meet an emergency when the attorney general and police chief announced before 10 a.m. that the emergency had ended."

Reiterating his statement at the time of the Mayday arrests, Kennedy said, "Lawlessness by the lawless does not justify lawlessness by the lawmen."